

**RABINOVITCH SCHOOL and WORKSHOP**

**of**

# **ART PHOTOGRAPHY**



"... they had first to stop and think, a procedure that has wonderful results whenever people take the time for it."

—Dr. Robert T. Morris, *Fifty Years a Surgeon*.

"There is a distinction between spending money in pure foolishness or in poor foolishness."

—Dr. Wm. N. Macartney,  
*Fifty Years a Country Doctor*, 1938.

"Few psychological changes are so powerful as those which persuade people that they can do things of which they previously thought themselves incapable."

—Winifred Holtby.

RABINOVITCH SCHOOL and WORKSHOP  
of

## ART PHOTOGRAPHY

A small personal school for professionals and non-professionals. Unique individual training for those who see differently and wish to make individual pictures. Day and evening. Started 1920.

40 West 56th Street, New York    Circle 7-5824



ANY FOOL CAN TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS; and most fools do. They buy one of those fancy dinguses with a lot of chromium plate on it and begin making motions with it; and keep on. Pretty soon, or sooner, a "new model" comes out and they get that; and keep on making more motions. Practically all, or nearly all, of these dinguses are brought out with the idea of foisting "new models" and still "newer models" later on. If a manufacturer is about to market a dingus and he has as many as two "ideas" to go on it he will add neither. He will simply bring out the dingus with more chromium on it than a similar dingus already has. This will sell to a certain set of suckers. Then, a year later, or less, he will bring it out again as a "new model" with the first idea (usually useless) tacked on to it. This will sell to a new set of suckers and to a certain per cent of the first set. Then, after another short interval, he will bring it out again as the "latest model" (for the time being, anyway) and this will sell to three sets of suckers, a new set and a certain per cent of the first two sets. The game can be carried on indefinitely, and is; and is practically "infallible" as Barrie would call it.

But in the long waits, sometimes as long as nearly a year, between these "new" models the manufacturers bring out "accessories." An accessory is usually something which the manufacturers cannot do without. It was John Fiske who said that the true benefactor of humanity was he who made two blades of grass grow where only one grew before; but photography it seems, is not for humanity but for the manufacturers, and the true benefactor of the manufacturer is the manufacturer who brings out dozens (or hundreds) of accessories where none were needed before. One of these chromium contraptions is advertised as having "over 500 accessories available" for it. (American Photography, Sept. 1938, page Adv. 27.)

When an advertisement appears of a "new" dingus, or of a "new model" of a "new" dingus, or of a "new" accessory, the fools behave in the same way as the dog in the Pavlov experiment did when his dinner bell rang. They've been reflex conditioned that way (and the advertisements are written, as are also the catalogues of photographic goods, by the folk who used to write children's fairy tales—before children became too sophisticated—all highly imaginative minds. And they drink immoderately).

The next phase of the disease, though oftentimes it comes at an even earlier stage, is swapping the dingus or accessory for one of "different" motions or with "different" doodads on it. A well known photo supply store in New York reports that "in a thirty-day check-up of sales . . . nearly 70% of the business transacted during the month of June" was "consummated with a trade-in of one kind or another." (American Photography, Sept. 1938, page 681.) And, it is quite likely that a large part of the remaining 30% came back the same way later.

But all this is but the very beginning. Next come the hundreds—literally—kinds of films and the dozens of varieties of printing papers and the innumerable (no one has ever been able to count these) developers; and books on photography—of which there is a veritable deluge—and photo magazines and camera clubs. And exhibitions are held—of hundreds or thousands of prints per show—under high sounding names, of which the art critics say nothing at all or hardly anything—and whichever it is





BEN SCHNALL  
1935 Class



it's in a way that can't ever be misinterpreted as being praise of even the faintest kind.

And it's all simply wunnerful. *If* they don't waken.

Though while it lasts it's a damn good way to ward off the discomfort of tape-worm or athlete's foot or the heebee-jeebees or the tic or whatever other nervous or mental disorders they may have; and it's a much more pleasant way, though exceedingly more expensive, than resorting to the use of patent medicines or to greatly increased cigarette smoking.

But—it has nothing to do with the making of pictures. As I said in a folder published September 10, 1936.

*It's exciting to make pictures. To make them, not to take them. Making pictures means having an intent or an idea plus a knowledge of the means—tools, materials and processes—to carry out this intent. To carry it out so that the finished work expresses this intent. So that it expresses it with fine feeling and in fine workmanship.*

If you are becoming serious about your photography—whether amateur or professional—you will begin to want to make pictures with your camera instead of taking photographs.

There is only one way—and there has been only one way in all the other graphic arts all these hundreds of years—to learn how to make pictures. To go to some one who himself knows how to make them *and* who knows how to impart this knowledge and skill *plus* the feeling with which to use them. As far back as four hundred years ago Cennino Cennini said in *Il Libro Dell'Arte*.

"... You therefore, who with lofty spirit are fired with this ambition ... begin to submit yourself to the direction of a master for instruction as early as you can ... But I give you this advice; take care to select the best one ... and the one who has the greatest reputation."

and this has been the fairly constant refrain down to our day as expressed by Prof. Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., in his *Modern Painting*.

"I can imagine no real instruction in any art where the student does not constantly witness creative processes and to some extent share in them. Nor is this ideal of personal instruction merely theoretical. Nearly every great artist of the century has followed about the course I have indicated ... He has attached himself intimately to some master whose work he admires."

Moreover, in photography, as my pupil Prof. Walt Dehner (himself originally an art director and now the head of the art department of a university which takes art seriously) has pointed out—a fine command of the medium is more essentially a part of the picture making than it is in the other graphic media. This is true. A man may be a poor draughtsman or a poor painter and get his ideas over even though as drawing or painting his work is not fine, but in photography the idea is more closely bound up with the means of expressing it and if these means are not adequately mastered then the idea may be entirely, or nearly so, lost.

It behooves you then, "you ... who with lofty spirit are fired with this ambition" to be most careful to whom you 'submit yourself' for training in photography. It is no coincidence that the half dozen finest of the younger violinists all come from one and the same teacher, and similar instances exist in all other musical fields and in all the older graphic arts.



There are many photography schools—among them a half dozen, at least so far as we know, conducted by people who tried to become pupils of mine; at least one by a former pupil of mine, one of the *worst* I've ever had; and another, now in the planning, by another very worst pupil of mine. They make all kinds of claims and more than all kinds of promises both stated and implied and their advertisements and catalogues are written by the same tribe, and in the same spirit, as those of photographic paraphernalia. One of them advertises "limited enrollment" and "individual guidance" with a class of forty; and another, a still larger mill, conveys the impression throughout its literature that its course is practically private instruction. Truly a case of *caveat emptor*!

There is ONLY ONE teacher of photography whose own work is highly considered by those who know and there is ONLY ONE teacher of photography whose pupils' work stands out above the rest. And the following pages are filled with evidence of this.

The RABINOVITCH SCHOOL and WORKMANSHIP of ART PHOTOGRAPHY is unique in many ways—only a few of which is there space to mention.

1. It is a small personal school. Actually and literally. A class is eight or ten students and even this huge number meets all together at only one session a week. At the other three sessions each week the student works alone—on a schedule—and this schedule is so distributed that only one or two or three work here at one time. In this way—and in this way only is such a thing possible—*each student works out his own potentialities to their utmost* and each pupil's work has an *individual style* of its own instead of being the usual and ordinary classroom product, which even when "good" is still only usual and ordinary.

2. It is not a school in the institutional sense but a personal relationship between each pupil and RABINOVITCH and the method of training is one based on that used in the *botegas* of the masters of the Renaissance. This, again, is possible—and possible only—in a school which is really small.

3. It has an exhibition gallery with wall space for 68 prints (up to 20 by 16 inches) under glass and a long narrow table for portfolios. Here are hung mid-term and end-term shows of the current class and group shows of new work and one-man shows by graduates. A few times a year a notice is sent out *New group show going up. What have you?* and a show is picked from what comes in in response. When a pupil has stood up well in a few group shows he is groomed for a one-man show. The gallery is not a school affair only but is conducted like any other art gallery. It is open to the public (hours 9 to 5:30 daily, except Sundays and holidays), notices are sent to the press and it has always been seriously regarded by the art critics—this in itself a unique status for photography. Indeed, as I wrote in October 1935, *We are the only group in photography whose work has received continuous favorable comments.*

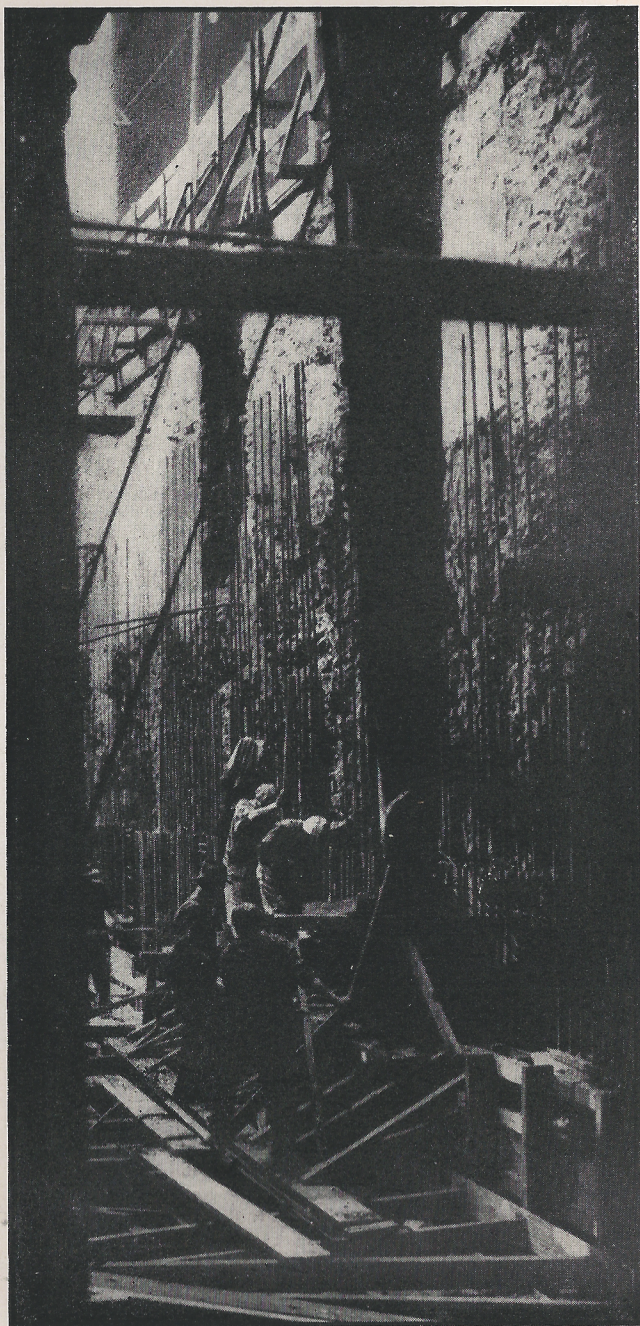
Aside from the financial benefits to pupils—occasional print sales, occasional commissions, one-man shows as a debut to start professional portraiture, first contacts with art directors and art editors which led to others and are still leading, one of these contacts running four years and bringing in over two thousand dollars—a far finer and further reaching effect has





GRAND DUCHESS MARIE  
1934 Class

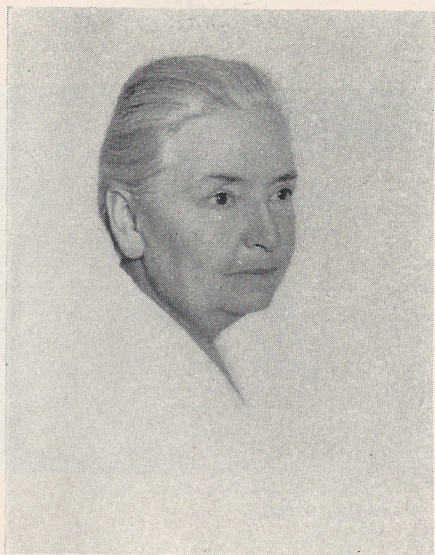




KNOX HALL MONTGOMERY  
1927 Class

*Courtesy Fortune*

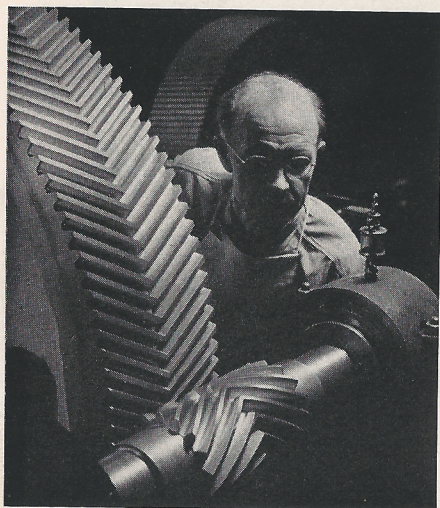




JANET GRIMES  
1934 Class

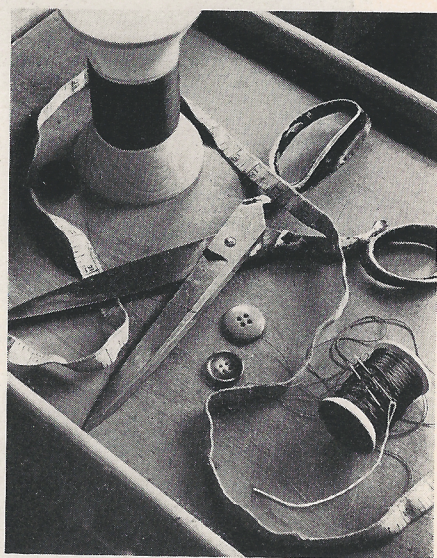


TED COVALENCE  
1937 Class



DMITRI KESSEL  
1934-5 Class

*Courtesy Fortune*



KNOX HALL MONTGOMERY  
1927 Class





FRANCES BINKLEY  
1938 Class



ALLAN RICHARDSON  
1929 Class



KNOX HALL MONTGOMERY  
1927 Class



been the influence the gallery has had on the *quality*, and general tone of pupils' work. Our professionals consciously or subconsciously (or perhaps fifty-fifty) with their eye on the gallery walls have escaped the rut that commercial work inevitably, as it seems, leads to; and our amateurs have been kept on their toes as they each see themselves besides the others. And sometimes when an amateur wants to, or has to, become a professional he knows just where he ranks and just what he may expect, and he doesn't have to start off with either an inferiority complex or with any self delusions. Our gallery walls are honest—they always tell them.

There are many other ways in which THE SCHOOL is unique, but the picture I've been trying to show you is a small personal school—a 16 by 30 feet studio at one end, seven small individual dark rooms adjoining this, and an exhibition gallery at the front, all this occupying a parlor floor loft in the very heart of the art district in the city, and the rest of the story is in the illustrations and the critics' reviews and the WHAT PRICE FINE PHOTOGRAPHY page in this booklet.

For the AMATEUR (and I'm using the word in the European sense rather than that which means tyro) THE SCHOOL offers a sound foundation in the principles and practice of the medium and puts him on the road to realizing his aims and ambitions in photography. For this amateur, the kind we mean, goes into photography to satisfy some need or craving which is not appeased by his daily work, and this need is not satisfied by pottering and fumbling and "experimenting" (we call it expensive frustration) and by becoming a member of that legion sect known as ACCIDENTALIST PHOTOGRAPHERS of which so many later become COUE votaries. The amateur of this type will be satisfied with nothing else, and nothing less, than the making of pictures—real pictures, like those you see in this booklet, and like those made in the other graphic media, such as you will find in *Fine Prints of the Year* a volume published annually by Minton, Balch & Company.

In short, we mean the serious amateur with a picture making, rather than a pottering, urge. And of these THE SCHOOL has had quite a few and wants more. Some of them—writers, architects, advertising directors, layout men, scientists, and artists in other media—have combined their photography with their other work and of these some have become semi-professionals while others through some change in their fortunes have turned to photography entirely as full professionals.

For the PROFESSIONAL it should be pointed out—and THE SCHOOL has been pointing it out for some years to its pupils and is now graciously extending this unkind service to others—the law of supply and demand in photography works like this: there is a greater supply of than demand *for* (great though this demand is) poor photography, and there is a greater demand *for* than supply of fine photography. By fine photography we mean good photographs that are also pictures. The difference between even a good photographer and one who can design or compose pictures with the camera is the same as that between a good seamstress and a fine clothes designer, and the difference is not only of degree but of kind. There is a very plain moral here and it is so plain that to do more than refer the gentle reader (if you are still that) to the critics' reviews and to WHAT PRICE FINE PHOTOGRAPHY would be to descend to grievous redundancy.



But, whether they've remained amateurs or become semi-professionals or professionals many have become craftsmen of a high order and (some) artists and in this way have begun to find and realize themselves through their picture making and have become finer persons.

And this is really what THE SCHOOL exists for and this its reason for being—the teaching of persons through a subject rather than the teaching of the subject.

### *"Photography As Art*

To those who still refuse to accord good photography a fine art status a half hour or so at the Rabinovitch Gallery is heartily recommended. Changing exhibitions of one-man, groups, and student shows are always on view there, and the camera is seen at its serious best. Rabinovitch (accent the *o* syllable) is a veteran of the sensitized surface medium and in the rear of the gallery he has a workshop cluttered with students from New Zealand, Oshkosh, and New York. As you look around he will eye you warily with hands thrust in the pockets of a hypo-stained smock, but that is all right. He knows his art, and he is a stickler for craftsmanship. Ask him when he is having his own retrospective . . ."—*Paul Bird* in THE ART DIGEST, February 15, 1937.

" . . . Rabinovitch, who seems to have the faculty of impressing others with the possibilities of the camera as a means of expression and at the same time teaching them 'how to do it'; is holding an exhibition . . . of his pupils' work. About 100 prints are being shown, of every conceivable type of subject, handled with varied aims, from the purely practical to the artistic. This is, apparently, the place to go if you would know what can be done with the camera and how it is done."—THE NEW YORK SUN, June 16, 1934.

"The outstanding success of Rabinovitch, teacher of photography—and his pupils—has been due to a fortunate combination of circumstances. First he is a photographic genius; second, he has marked ability to recognize and develop to its maximum degree the artistic individuality of others; and, finally, believing that worthwhile students deserve undiluted instruction. Rabinovitch sees to it that his pupils are worthwhile, reserving the privilege of sifting out unworthy applicants."

—THE CAMERA, October, 1937.

*A few words, very few, about myself—by myself:*

*The kind of catalogue I would like to have for my SCHOOL would be one with illustrations of my own and my pupils' work and only two paragraphs of type.*

*But, since this is not—not yet—a perfect world and not the least of its imperfections is that we have been badly brought up and "educated" to place too inordinate a value on the value of the printed word, I am bringing this catalogue out as it is and would like to tell you what those two paragraphs would have been.*

*One would have been on the inside back cover and would have stated the duration of the course and the fee—two absolutely necessary bits of information.*

*And the other would have gone on the first page and would simply say: I am the man who made these pictures of mine and taught these others how to make theirs. Some of them were beginners and some not as good. Look at these pictures and come and see the originals in our gallery and also others by them and also others by pupils not reproduced here.*

*And I am the man who trained them.*

September 1, 1938

R.





ESTHER BORN  
1933 Class



## THE COURSE

is an intensive comprehensive training in the fundamentals of photography—both in the processes and in the application of these in the carrying out of the intent in the picture making. A knowledge of the processes is one thing, skill in using them is another, but using this knowledge and skill toward carrying out the intent of the picture making is quite something else again and *by far the major part*.

For here begin to enter other factors besides intelligence. Here enters the ability to *see* and the further ability to *coordinate what you see* into a picture, and it is after this that the knowledge and the skill in processes begin to come in. For processes in themselves—no matter how knowledgeably and skillfully used—do not make pictures. And they never did. And they never will. And that is why all the terrific to-do about apparatus and paraphernalia and materials is, to express it tactfully, woefully misdirected.

The course deals with the fundamentals in a basic manner, going to the very root of what does this and what makes that, so that our pupils go into any special field of photography—architecture, fashion, portraiture, advertising or illustration or any other, or color—without any further special courses. We have a collection here of work done by pupils, both during the course and after, in all these fields and in others.

### THE COURSE COVERS

The making of the “perfect” negative—How to vary this for different purposes and special effects—Proofing—The reading and diagnosing of negatives—Corrective treatment for the different kinds of defects—The technique of printing—The technique of fine printing—Our own special “X” formula developer—Lenses, their construction and performance—Our own specially made R lens (this is not on the market but is made up for my pupils at cost)—The best plates and films for different purposes—Printing papers, domestic and foreign, and their special individual characteristics and differences—Finishing and mounting prints—Making copies, positives, duplicate negatives, etc.—Special cameras and accessories for special work and a simplification of these to the essentials only—Sensitometry translated into function and developed into a tonal scale on the lines and concept of variations comparable to that of Bach’s Well Tempered Clavichord—Rendering color in monotone.

The anatomy and physiology of pictures—Outlines of pictorial form and function—The aesthetic of graphic art and of photography—Grammar, syntax and composition—The science and art of lighting—Perspective and modelling and plastic values—Application of these principles to portraiture, the dance, the nude, still life, dramatic roles, genre, groups, architecture, interiors, advertising and illustration, etc.—Physiognomy—Individuality in portrait photography—A study of the fine portraits of the last five centuries—A study of seventy-five of my negatives and comparing them with the finished prints—Modern photography and creative ideas in picture making, with many examples.



We have three different types of cameras and about mid-term one of our graduate pupils brings in three other types and demonstrates their pros and cons. We also have some twenty odd lenses—from the fuzziest to the most wiry sharpest.

Pupils use these and buy their own outfit after they've found what it is they want to do in photography and how they're going to do it.

Obviously, words can give only a blue print outline of the course and even this outline only touches, and barely, *what* is taught. It tells nothing of *how* it is taught. That is suggested in the illustrations and the critics' reviews and the WHAT PRICE FINE PHOTOGRAPHY.

The course, as may already have been gathered from reading the paragraphs describing the unique features of THE SCHOOL, is given in an individual special way in what for want of a better term could be called the one-at-a-time method, a term perhaps hard to understand in an age where even education, and that not only in photography, is carried on by mass production methods.

The course is twenty-five weeks. There are four sessions each week and work outside in addition. Of the four sessions here one is a class session and in the other three the pupil works alone in the studio or dark room, with Mr. Rabinovitch on call (Mr. Rabinovitch himself—always—no assistants). The class is small and the schedule of the pupil's personal work is so distributed that only one or two or three work at one time. DAY and EVENING.

*The fee is \$500. No laboratory charges or any other extras. AND—we do not sell equipment or supplies.*

There is also a SHORTER COURSE—it is the above course but without the three workshop sessions each week.

The fee is \$250.

Then there is also a still longer course than the regular one. It is the regular course as it stands above and with additional work for five months longer. It is for those who wish to keep on still learning after they've "finished." Like post-graduate courses in subjects which are already taken seriously.

The fee (which includes the regular course) is \$1000.

A class starts the end of September and the end of January.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS: General alertness and a fairly high order of intelligence—above the mental age of seven.

ENROLLMENT: You write for an enrollment form and apply for the next class forming and wait till you're accepted.



## OPPORTUNITIES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

"Photography is an essential service in modern business and industry. It is used extensively throughout the modern world, and as time goes on there are new applications being made. These applications lie in a wide variety of fields . . . In light of the many applications of photography, most authorities believe that it is just coming into its own . . .

"Photography offers an opportunity for service, an opportunity for inner satisfaction, and an opportunity for artistic self-expression. It provides a constant challenge to greater achievement in that it is not primarily a routine task . . . It offers also greater opportunity for independence than almost any other profession, in that the photographer usually determines his own working conditions, hours, and methods of work, and is his own employer.

"There are hundreds of different types of work and many paths by which one may enter the field."

—From "If You Are Considering Photography—" by Mark Ellingson and C. B. Neblette, 1936. Published by Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute.

" . . . Too many have taken it up in the past because of the fascination there is in creating an appealing image, without being willing to do the work necessary to educate themselves properly as one would be forced to do in practically every other profession. That is why we find so many struggling along on a bread and butter basis, when with suitable training they could have a much better living . . . To a young person seriously considering entering photography as a profession, we would emphasize proper training as strongly as possible. No matter what line of effort one selects in these days of 'survival of the fittest' in the terrific competition of life, to attempt to get by without training is to undertake an overwhelming handicap."

—From "Choosing Photography as a Profession" by Wallace E. Dobbs in *The Camera*, February, 1936.

In "Picture This Career" Helen Joseffy says of us in *Mademoiselle*, August, 1936:

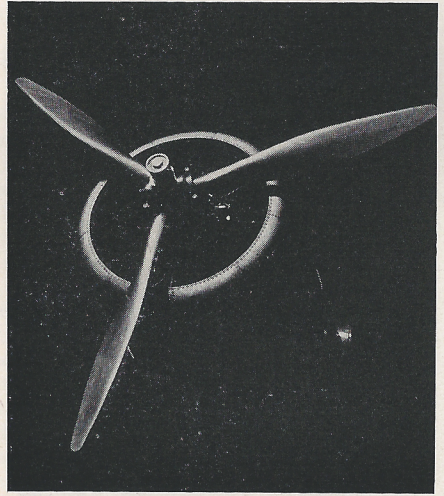
" . . . If you prefer the *atelier* atmosphere, Rabinovitch is your man. One can hardly do justice in a paragraph to the delightful, salty, unique personality of the head of the Rabinovitch School and Workshop of Art Photography . . . Rabinovitch the artist has a fine 'Nude' in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and his pictures have been widely exhibited in the galleries of Paris, London and New York. Rabinovitch the teacher has many distinguished graduates to his credit, including the Grand Duchess Marie. Rabinovitch the business man points with pride to the financial success of his students . . . The atmosphere is informal but very intense. Prices are rather high—but after all there's the inimitable Rabinovitch.

"And now what price photography? . . . One eminent teacher says it's the most overcrowded of all careers at the bottom. But at the top, 'Well, people who can make money make money at photography.'"

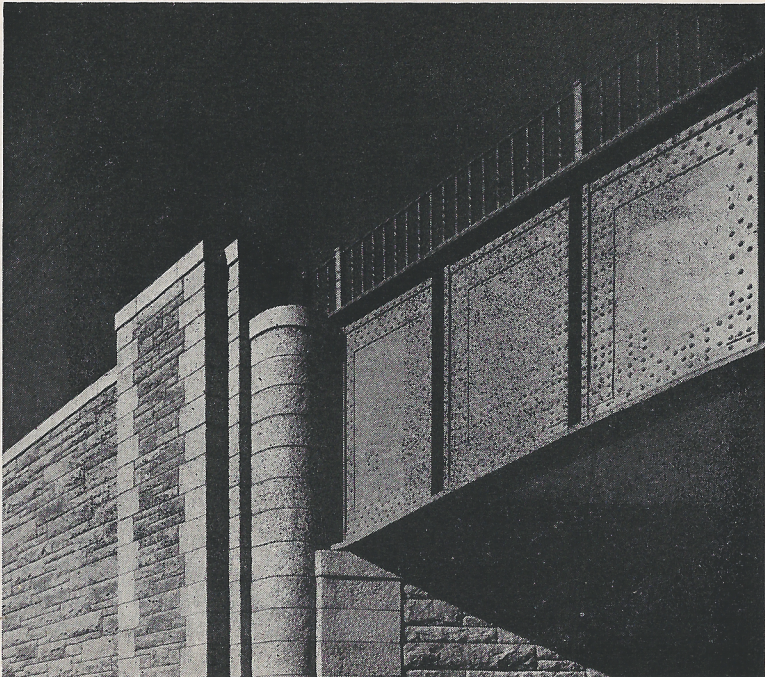




WALT DEHNER  
1935-6 Class

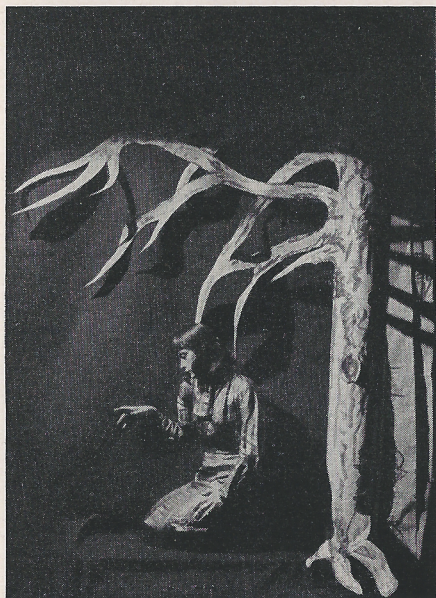


DMITRI KESSEL  
1934-5 Class



ESTHER BORN  
1933 Class





ROBERT BOUTET-SCALLAN  
1936 Class



WILLIAM KARNBACH  
1937-8 Class



JANE KREAG  
1935-6 Class



## Reprints of some edifying (and perhaps informative) folders I've written for exhibitions held here.

### 43 Photographs by DMITRI KESSEL

May 31st to June 15th, 1935.

Even in photography, where you expect it least, there is occasionally someone who wants to do things well.

We have these occasions quite occasionally. Dmitri Kessel is another one of them.

Kessel started unhampered by any of the usual handicaps. He had never been an Anglo-Saxon, nor had he ever belonged to a camera club, nor read any photo magazine; and he had never been (I've checked up carefully on this) to the Julien Levy gallery.

With such a marvelous background he could have gone and bought himself a camera with as many movements as shouldn't be crowded on to it and started "experimenting" (as the frustrates call it). And, in a few years—more or less (it takes most of them more) he could have learned to turn out the arty-crafty stuff you see in the pictorialist exhibitions or the other kind (we can't print the word) you see in photographers' show cases and the "leading" magazines.

But Kessel wanted to make *pictures*, not "glorified" (?) snapshots. And, he wanted to make them while he was still young. And, he had seen a one-man show of fifty prints by my pupil Esther Born, eight months after she'd started as a total beginner.

And so he came to me. This, in itself, was a flash of genius.

Kessel entered the class which started Sept. 21st, with no previous experience. He very soon got over his first fright of me—some of my pupils get over it sooner than others—and began making pictures very early. And without knowing it. At the class mid-term exhibition, after ten weeks, he had two portraits, made in the 6th week (Nos. 38-39); Twilight Over Manhattan made in the 7th week (No. 36); and Apples made in the 8th week (No. 30). At the recent Retrospective Exhibition of ten years of the School, he had 26 prints among the 150 shown by the 16 exhibitors. The art critic of the Sun singled out two of his prints for special mention, and the Times critic called his work "moodily poetic."

Kessel's work is subjective. He sees things and feels them and makes pictures of the things he sees and feels. But he sees them with *his* eyes and feels them with *his* feelings. You can see from his pictures which things he feels more than he does others. Sometimes he is not able to "realize" the picture he feels. He doesn't know how or it just doesn't come off. Sometimes more command of the medium is needed. He gets it and the picture emerges. He knows nothing of all the noises in photography, of the sects and the cults and the cliques, and he has probably never heard of dynamic symmetry or significant form or any of the other shibboleths which have overlaid picture making. He uses simple equipment, is a good workman, and is quite innocent of all the fast accumulating gadgetry of photography, not having even an exposure meter. He just makes pictures, and keeps on making pictures—pictures which show a high sensitivity rather than a display of virtuosity—pictures which depict his reactions as a person rather than the preciosities of the medium.

All in all, Kessel and I are very well pleased with each other.

And I am very well pleased with myself.

### 55 Photographs by ROBERT BOUTET-SCALLAN

October 20th to 31st, 1936.

... When you recall, as perhaps you so often have, that most good photography is so terribly boring (and boring terribly) because it is nothing, or very little, else besides good photography, and that the few photographs that are interesting are not good photography, you will the better appreciate these pictures by Boutet and understand why he has so quickly begun to succeed. Yea, even financially.

Whether you call these photographs surrealist or post surrealist or neo surrealist, the fact still remains—aside from labels—that Boutet has IDEAS, plus the command of his medium to carry them out in the spirit and manner in which they were conceived, and well, too. Truly, a combination rarely met. ...



PICTURESQUE MEXICO, Its Life, Landscape and Architecture in Photographs by ESTHER BORN—Nov. 10th to 30th, 1936.

In a day when we are continuously beset on all sides by photographs and photography exhibitions—most of them sheer swill and most of the rest common shoddy, with an extremely small residue mere empty exhibitionist virtuosity—it is difficult for me not to be extravagant about these prints of ESTHER BORN. Only my continued policy of understatement and letting the critics go me much better (which, many thanks, they do) keeps me within bounds.

Esther Born was an architect who came to me in 1933 to study photography because, as she says, she "got mad" when looking over some photographs of architecture she had taken in Italy and France and realized how the fine architecture was ruined by the poor photography.

Her first one-man show of some fifty prints, held three months after finishing the course, was well received. The New York Sun gave it a large spread with three reproductions. A second show of sixty prints followed eight months later, and in between and after she had prints in group exhibitions of my pupils, and was invariably singled out by the critics for special mention.

Given a commission by a well known magazine to make photographs of the modern architecture of Mexico. Esther Born also made pictures of the life and architecture of Old Mexico, and it is these that form this present exhibition. The modern series will follow later. As a matter of strict fact, there were enough fine prints for three good sized exhibitions, but my penchant for conciseness sets me against the Theatre Guild-Eugene O'Neill trilogy idea.

Of the pictures themselves little need be said, as they speak for themselves—and well and plainly. Esther Born's approach to her subject is entirely architectural. Whatever it is she's photographing—aunts, ash cans or architecture, portraits, puppy dogs, pretzels, as her first business card put it—her approach is always architectural (that is, if the aunts and puppy dogs behave), her photography being the *means* and form and function the end.

This—to my own mind—is what good graphic art should be, and these pictures go a good way toward restoring a quality

that has been left out of a great deal of modern photography.

Looking over these prints and relating them with those of her previous exhibitions it is certainly most obvious that Esther Born has a keen eye and a sensitive mind coupled with a sound architectural background and a fine training in photography.

BEN SCHNALL—April, 1938.

Schnall made a bad start. He had taken a course in one of those photography schools that promise you everything—practically everything except electing you President of the United States, and the experience had made a pessimist, a cynic, an atheist and an awful so-and-so of him.

When he saw a mid-term exhibition of my then current class, of work done between the 4th and 7th weeks and of the three preceding classes of work from the 2nd week on—and *all by total beginners*—he just refused to believe his eyes. Or me. Or anything.

And so he went on a check-up expedition . . . and enrolled in my next class.

Which, in itself, proved he was not half as dumb as he looks.

And, surprisingly, he's been surprising us often since.

When his class ended he turned in eleven good prints and I hung eight of them (lack of space) in a sixty print show by fourteen of my pupils. The Times critic called "*much of it highly accomplished and imaginative*" and the Herald Tribune critic singled out Schnall's prints in his review and said they had "*a professional distinction.*"

Then, in less than a year, and while still an amateur and making an honest living, he had a one-man show of 66 prints.

And, it was a good show.

A couple of months after this he became a part time professional and now for nearly a year has been a full professional.

His work has appeared in American Architect, Architectural Record, House and Garden, House Beautiful, Forum, Literary Digest, Life and many others.

He writes me:

"Most impressive impressions in the short time I've been on my own are the lack of knowledge among those who should know as to what is a photograph—and the abuse of miniature photography which, like cancer, will eventually be minimized."

No, he's not dumb at all. He just fools people into thinking it.



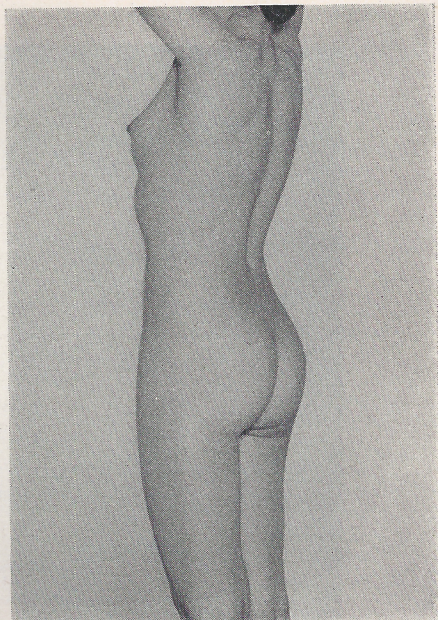


HELEN P. BREAKER  
of 1926





LOUISE WILSON  
1938 Class



QUENTIN B. PARSONS  
1937-8 Class



BEN SCHNALL  
1935 Class

Courtesy New York Times



## THE GRAND DUCHESS NOW PLIES A CAMERA

BY HELEN WORDEN

"RABINOVITCH?"

"Yes'm. Top floor." An unsung Bill Robinson double-shuffled his way back through the dark little hall to the elevator. "I'll hist yo' up."

"Grand Duchess Marie?"

"Fust doah to yo' right. Cain't miss it."

I stepped into a small room. No society tea here. No chitter-chatter. No throngs of people pushing to meet royalty. No liveried servants. No samovar.

The place was stark and bare. Perhaps it had once been a hall bedroom. The house was a brownstone front, remodelled. The walls were white. They were hung with photographs. Unusual photographs, that were of things and not of people.

A woman, simply dressed in a dark blue crepe, sat at a table near the window. Her back was to the door.

"The Grand Duchess Marie's photographs?"

The woman turned. It was the Grand Duchess Marie. She smiled. "Yes. These are my photographs."

I glanced at the twenty-five or thirty that made a frieze around the room.

"Did you take them all?"

"But of course!"

The Grand Duchess Marie has been studying photography for five months with Rabinovitch in his studio at 142 W. 57th St. She was one of a class of four that included Vivian Spoerri, Katherine Sayre Hollis and Leonora Bothwell. The course ended this month.

The Grand Duchess exhibited her studies yesterday. She hopes to do commercial art.

"I have taken pictures all of my life," she explained. "But I never studied photography seriously until I came to Rabinovitch.

The first few months were so difficult that she felt she could not go on.

"I told Rabinovitch I was stupid," she said. "He begged me to be patient. I thought 'I can never do this; it is too hard to be so careful of detail; there is too much to remember'." She stopped and smiled. "And then, all at once, taking pictures the right way seemed no work at all. I found very suddenly that I could do it."

"I've tried to keep women out, but you can't do what you want in this world," Rabinovitch had joined us.

He is short and squat. His voice is rich and deep. His eyes, behind steel-rimmed spectacles, focus with the precision of a camera lens. He comes from Odessa.

"I don't want to get a ladies' angle to my school," he said. "Fifty-fifty is bad enough. But what can you do? They used to be evenly divided. Now!" He shrugged his shoulders and dug hypo-bath-stained hands deep in the pockets of his blue smock.

"At any rate," he continued, "the Grand Duchess is a very good pupil. She even worked on Christmas Day. My whole class did!"



The camera studies the Grand Duchess has made reflect her life and character.

The cut glass perfume bottle moulded in the shape of a crown, the study of the hospital operating-room with the white-masked surgeons at work, the shadowy torso of the girl, the hands of the Grand Duchess' sister-in-law, wife of Dmitri; the white calla lily in the crystal bowl, the arrangement of scrubbing brushes, breakfast dishes, an individual coffee pot, a tiny Japanese garden, jewel-like in its minuteness, and two small glass-blown animals.

"I like to do things and not people," the Grand Duchess explained, "because I can make them do what I want."

"May I see your school?" I asked Rabinovitch. "School!" everyone shouted. "You will laugh when you see his school. It is just one room!"

The school was the big front room of the top floor. Magazines, books, cameras, Kleig lights, developing trays, dummy figures, a couch, several chairs, tables and a desk filled it. The only vacant spot was a small space in the center of the room. Three very wide, low windows let a great deal of light in.

"I am the faculty and the school," said Rabinovitch. "The equipment is in my head. We have no cafeterias, no recreation rooms, no auditorium for speeches. We work here."

Rabinovitch's photographs hang in the Metropolitan. Those that the Grand Duchess Marie has taken show his influence of pattern and strength. Grand duchesses, however, do not influence Rabinovitch's life.

"All sorts of people come to me," he said. "Some are nuts. I had one man who wanted to take nothing but flocks of sheep and big bridges. But I don't care what they do or who they are as long as they work. The Grand Duchess is all right. She works."

Rabinovitch is right. She works. Author of two popular books, writer of magazine articles, short stories, designer of dresses, and now photographer!

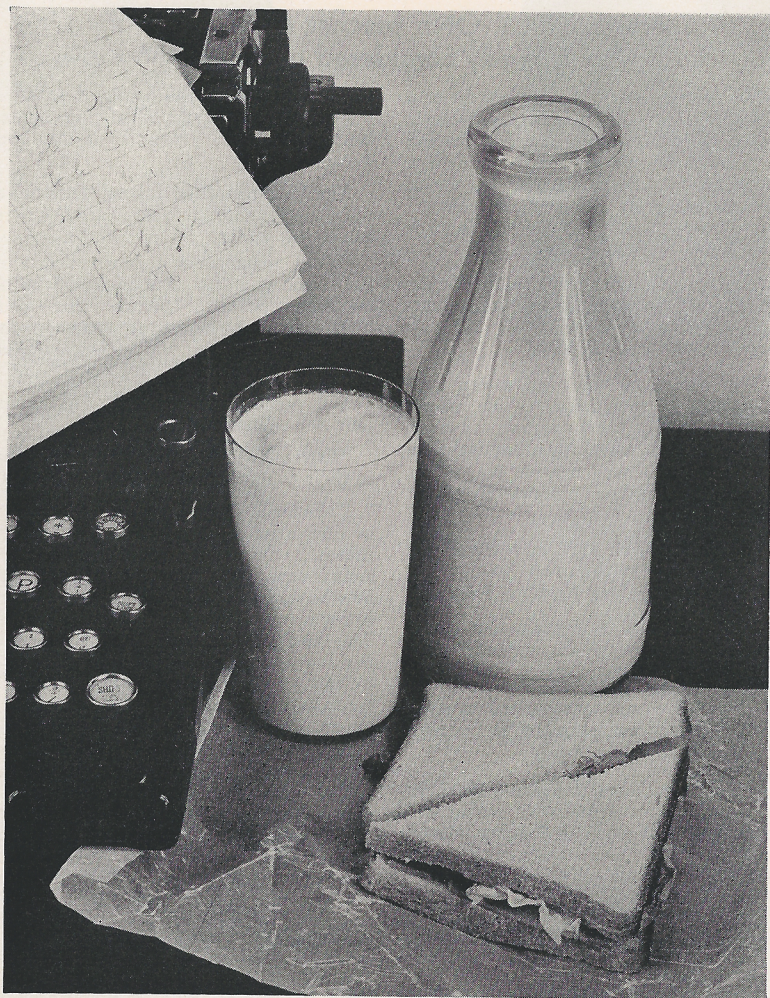
The woman who was born a Russian Grand Duchess, discarded a Swedish crown and has made not only a living but much money in this country, has worked."

—Reprinted from *New York World-Telegram*, May 25, 1934.

The Grand Duchess—in the announcement of the opening of her art photography studio—wrote:

"Although I came over to America in the interests of another form of art—writing—I could never forget the years devoted to designing and composition. These still held their old fascination for me. One of the modern expressions of art is photography, and this I now decided to take up as a study, particularly as the camera has always been a family hobby. But today photography is a science as well as an art and, therefore, I felt obliged to take regular instruction. I became a pupil of the famous Rabinovitch school. The further I went into the subject the more interested I became. Nothing can be more entrancing than the play and pattern of light and shadow. Photography is an art which keeps pace with our times, its aspects are varied, and every moment it presents another development."





PAUL W. KEARNEY  
1928 Class



## There is ONLY ONE teacher of photography whose work is highly considered by those who know.

"Artistic abstraction could not be at a higher level than it is in this supremely fine thing, which has the utmost feeling for form, texture and delicate modeling. Praxiteles would have danced for joy at it, so intense is its true classical feeling."  
—*Review of London Salon 1929 in British Journal of Photography.*

"One of the most admired in the exhibition . . . a work of sculptural purity."  
—*Review of Paris Salon 1928 in American Photography.*

"Uniqueness of style . . . a very special quality of their own . . . the magic suggestiveness of great painting . . . a sense of personality . . . not only a physical likeness but also a very definite realization of character and type . . . austere classic quality."  
—*Town Topics.*

"The effects are rich in texture; the characterization is dignified, serious and telling."  
—*New York Evening Post.*

"All done with a sureness that comes only with insight and understanding."  
—*New York Evening Sun.*

"Far above the average of portrait work. Prints of remarkable merit."  
—*British Journal of Photography.*

"Embodies a most felicitous character rendering . . . charged with subtle manipulation."  
—*New York Evening World.*

"Full of character and expression."  
—*Photographic Journal of America.*

"Excels in portraiture . . . decorative and imaginative . . . like a painter of versatile power . . . his portraits have convincing subjective qualities."  
—*Baltimore News.*

"Classics in the camera world . . . beauty, simplicity and character . . . belongs to the best in modern photography . . . the interest is always aroused."  
—*Christian Science Monitor.*

"They are always well placed with a beautiful quality of line design."  
—*New York Times.*

"Declines to compromise art with commercialism."  
—*Theatre Magazine.*

"The camera in the hands of an artist . . . plumbs the depth of the human heart and soul."  
—*New York Morning Telegraph.*

The Director of the Salon International du Nu Photographique, Paris, writes, March 14, 1933:

"Your prints had a great success in Paris, and you may have noticed I found no more beautiful picture than your Torso, famous for many years in the whole photographic world, as an ornament for the cover of my catalog."

(Of the 332 prints hung this is the only one reproduced in the catalog.)

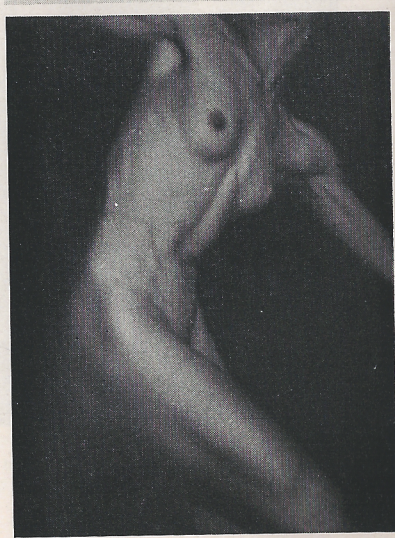
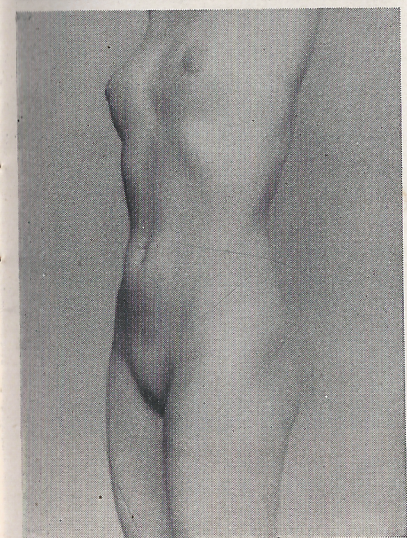
"Extremely rich in tone and powerful in their composition."  
—*Camera Craft.*

"The building up of a picture by means of lines or tones is undoubtedly the more difficult. It puts the severest test upon the artistic capacities of the photographer, and he who succeeds in it has his place assured in any exhibition of pictorial photography. The Nude Salon was particularly interesting in this respect, because being confined to one subject—the female figure—it afforded a ready means of comparison among the exhibitors. Judging by lines alone, the palm went to Rabinovitch, of New York, whose two torsos, with which many readers of American Photography are probably already acquainted, display a purity and perfection of line unattained by any other picture in the Salon."  
—*Review of the First International Nude Salon Paris in American Photography, August, 1933.*

"Rabinovitch can generally be counted upon to startle the jaded into refreshed attention. His latest adventure is a 'One Print Exhibition,' current at the Rabinovitch School and Workshop of Art Photography, 40 West Fifty-sixth Street, until the end of the month. The walls, customarily covered with work by the students of the school, are bare, and upon an easel in one corner of the attractive exhibition room has been placed a single photograph by Rabinovitch himself. It is a beautiful print of a calla lily; a print in which an individual flower attains the status of species and thus, before our eyes, becomes abstract."  
—*New York Times, May 19, 1935.*

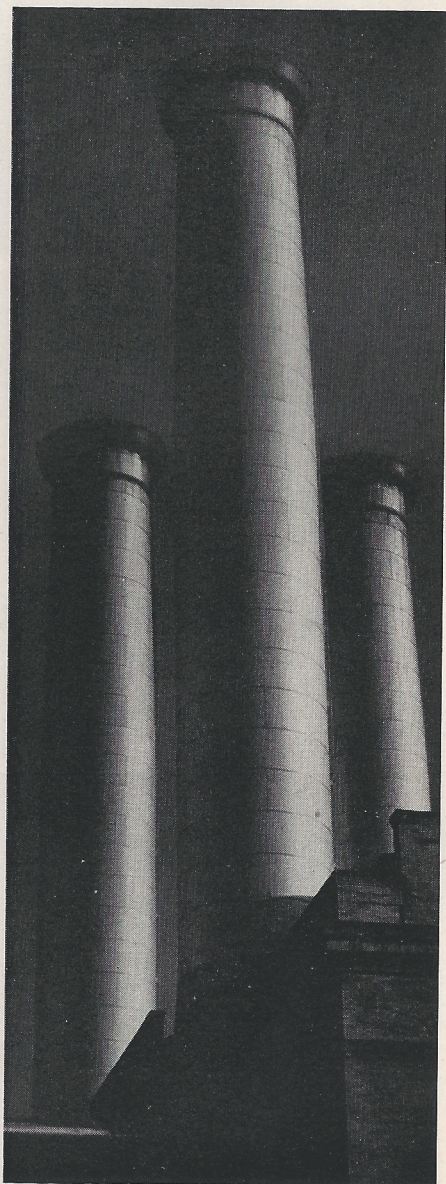
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Represented in Metropolitan Museum





6 Photographs by RABINOVITCH





DMITRI KESSEL  
1934-5 Class



BEN SCHNALL  
1935 Class



TED BURROWS  
1936 Class



## And there is ONLY ONE teacher of photography whose pupils' work stands out above the rest.

"After Mrs. Breaker had worked alone by herself for two years she set out in search of a school. She tried two. Then she found in New York a studio where she learned important things concerning this fascinating art . . .

In this year's Salon d'Art Photographique she exhibited several prints, and one, a study of hands, was chosen for reproduction in *L'Illustration*. As only seven of the thousand prints exhibited could be chosen, this was a coveted honor. Quite by chance her *Mains* was placed on the same page and right next to a study by her teacher Rabinovitch."

—*From a long article in the New York Evening Sun, January 6, 1930, on the work of Helen Pierce Breaker, whom the Sun calls "one of the three best known American art photographers in Paris."*

"Photographs by eight artists who are studying with Rabinovitch will continue to be shown for a few days longer at the Rabinovitch Gallery. Much of this work is admirable. The still-lives by Paul Kearney are remarkably clear and well composed. Esther Born has produced some splendid portraits of Diego Rivera (shown in portfolio). There are several effective nude torsos and some fine flower studies—delicate daisies in a bottle by Hilda Luginbuhl and a handsome lily by Grand Duchess Marie, who in some of her prints obtains interesting values through over-exposing. The group, other members of which are Knox Hall Montgomery, Paula Ripin, James V. Dunn and Helen Breaker, evinces a serious desire to explore the full possibilities of the medium."—*New York Times, July 1, 1934.*

"This month, at the Rabinovitch Gallery, an exhibition of photographs by eight pupils of Mr. Rabinovitch's classes of the last three years, makes an appealing display. All the refinements of the mechanical medium, plus taste and artistic individuality, are put in evidence in these works with a surprising uniformity of success. Especially notable, however, are the photographs of Esther Born, which are beautifully balanced and rich in tone, and the luminous flower studies of Miss Luginbuhl, who achieves her effects with the greatest simplicity."—*N. Y. Herald Tribune, June 17, 1934.*

"... Rabinovitch, who seems to have the faculty of impressing others with the

possibilities of the camera as a means of expression and at the same time teaching them 'how to do it,' is holding an exhibition . . . of his pupils' work. About 100 prints are being shown, of every conceivable type of subject, handled with varied aims, from the purely practical to the artistic. This is, apparently, the place to go if you would know what can be done with the camera and how it is done."—*New York Sun, June 16, 1934.*

"Dmitri Kessel, pupil of the Rabinovitch Workshop of Art Photography, at 40 West Fifty-sixth Street, is showing forty photographic studies in the school gallery: Mr. Rabinovitch pays a glowing tribute to his ability, in the exhibition catalogue, commending him to the public's attention. There is, indeed, a sensitive and scholarly distinction about his portraits and architectural studies, as for instance, the head of 'Helen Ludwig,' and the 'Plaza,' with the Karl Bitter fountain figure appearing in subdued silhouette, which requires no urging to appreciate. Some of these studies are products of a richer emotional experience than others, but technical skill is quite generally apparent."—*Herald-Tribune, June 9, 1935.*

CARLYLE BURROWS—*The Herald Tribune—October 25, 1936:*

"The exhibition of Guy Robert Boutet's photographs at the Rabinovitch Gallery represents the work of a young former pupil of Rabinovitch, who is making progress in the commercial field. The fifty-five still-life and fashion-plate studies on display are excellent photographs—clear, vivid in their contrasts of light and dark, and with the air of modernity about them which is one of the first requirements of photography for advertising. The fashion-plate figures, depending less on design than on lighting and pose, involve an intricate and ingenious variety of studies."

EMILY GENAUER—*The World-Telegram:*

"... These are not misty atmospheric wooly pictures seeking to assume the mantle of 'art' in the academic sense. But they are art, nevertheless, revealing in their vivid contrasts of light and shade their cogently and imaginatively arranged composition and juxtaposition of forms, many of the attributes of a good painting and, more important, others that are indigenous to photography."



The Architectural Record writes us:

June 7, 1937.

"Photographs of New Architecture in Mexico by Esther Born were exhibited at Harvard University in connection with the convention of the American Institute of Architects held in Boston June 1-4. These photographs were taken for The Architectural Record and will be included in a book on Mexico by Esther Born. The exhibition was commented on as one of the finest in photography and manner of presentation. Professor Joseph Hudnut, Dean of Fine Arts, requested that the exhibit be continued through June as one of the attractions of Commencement at Harvard University when 16,000 or more visitors will be at Cambridge.

A smaller exhibit of Mexican housing also by Esther Born is being shown at Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a part of a housing display and conference."

HERSCHEL BRICKELL—*The New York Post*:

"A handsome book by Esther Born called 'The New Architecture of Mexico' and containing a large number of unusually fine photographs reveals a side of present-day life in our neighboring republic that has been overlooked by the swarms of writers who have set down their impressions these last few years . . . Mrs. Born's photographs are a record of things done, and it is a record any country would be proud of, or should be. Modern design has made much more rapid progress in Mexico than in the United States . . . This is an admirably done job of letting us see what is going on nearby. Mexico can teach us things in architecture."

JEROME KLEIN—*The New York Post*, December 11, 1937:

"Rabinovitch is displaying photographs by eight of his brood. Guy Robert Boutet-Scallan permits his remarkable talent to trickle out in trifles. The sole exception is his remarkable print of a house in ruins. Foley achieves fine luminosity in his studies of the coal heap beyond the railroad tracks, and young Curtis Reider turns out clean, forceful industrials.

Dmitri Kessel, Ben Schnall and Jay Viles produce the smooth stuff that finds a ready place in luxury class magazines. There are also a romantic landscape by Elias Guterman and a well-handled Spanish view by J. Cardus."

HOWARD DEVREE—*in The New York Times* wrote January 23, 1938:

"Dmitri Kessel, whose third one-man show of photography is now at the Rabinovitch Studio Gallery, is already widely known for his industrial camera studies which have appeared in *Fortune* and elsewhere. Kessel is unusually successful in infusing an imaginative quality into his compositions and a sense of vitality into his work. The design of a staircase, the lighting on a broken facade or the meaning of a mechanism he conveys from an individual approach, without hocus-pocus. Tonal quality and clarity are stressed."

JEROME KLEIN—*The New York Post*, February 5, 1938:

"Rabinovitch, who easily reaches the boiling point, is now simmering over the new work of Dmitri Kessel which he extols for its commercial acceptability, together with photographic excellence. Kessel, it cannot be denied, is very skillful in display photography. And sometimes he goes way beyond. The molder's hands and the steel forge in operation (it's all there, down to the last grease spots) are splendid prints, business or no."

*The New York Times* wrote April 10, 1938, of Schnall's One-Man Show:

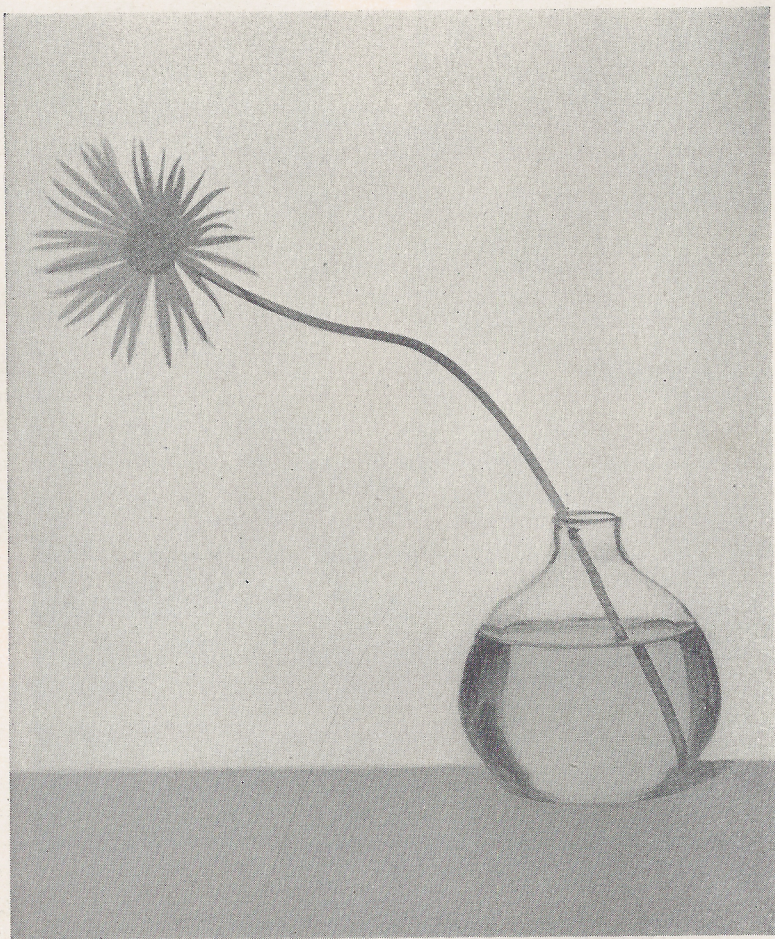
" . . . This is individual work in which a nice compositional sense and an ability to obtain detail without cluttering a picture are evident. A foreground of fallen pine needles; architectural shadows and masses; the long Utrillo-like vista of a street with light on damp surfaces, these Schnall realizes in his prints with clarity and without resorting to trick photography."

*The New York Herald Tribune*, May 15, 1938:

"A show of photographs by twenty photographers, some of them students and others professionals, is at the Rabinovitch Gallery. Among the more promising of the students are Louise Wilson, whose work is marked by a lovely texture and a delicate composition, and James R. Fitzsimmons, who is represented by an intriguing picture of river barges, photographed through the iron work of a bridge. Jules Szanton's portrait of an artist stands out among the professional prints."

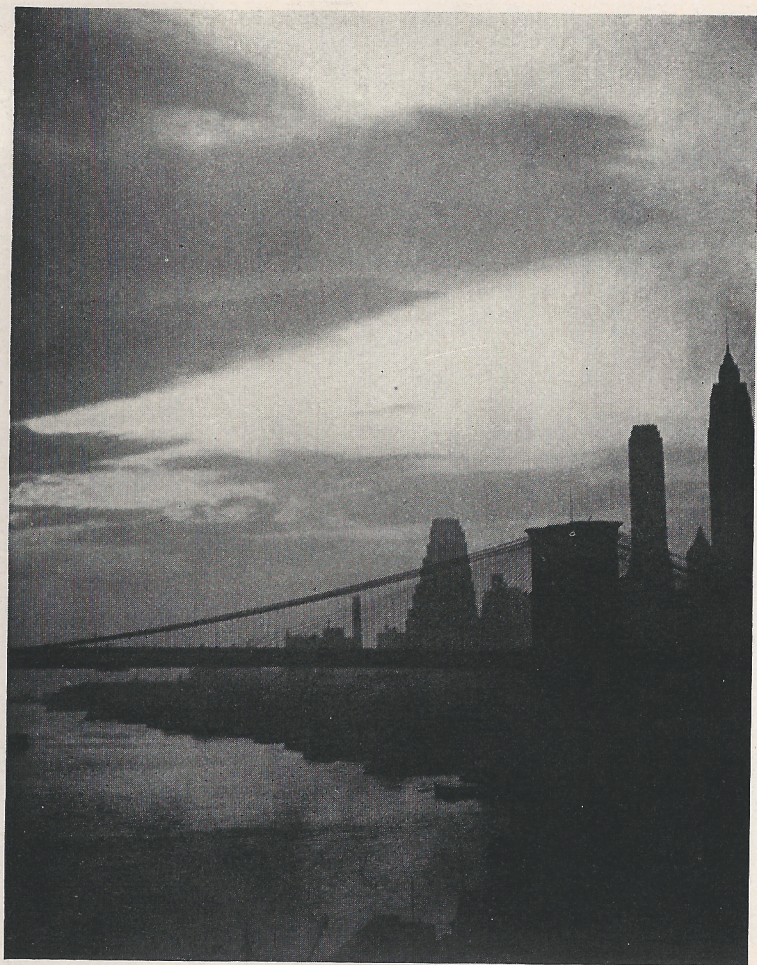
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DMITRI KESSEL  
1934-5 Class



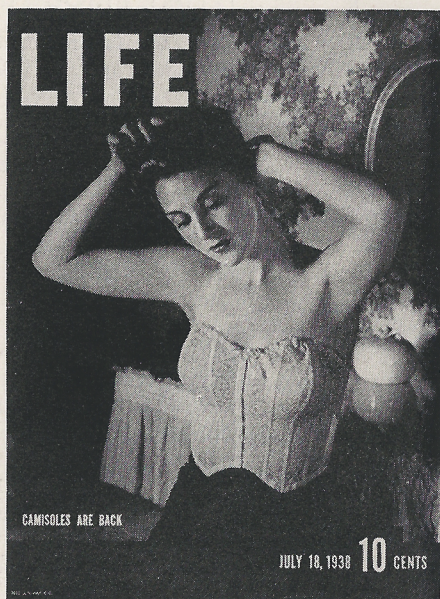


DMITRI KESSEL  
1934-5 Class





BEN SCHNALL  
1935 Class



DMITRI KESSEL  
1934-5 Class

*Courtesy Life*



ALFRED HENKART  
1936 Class



## WHAT PRICE FINE PHOTOGRAPHY?

**I**N ADDITION to the current exhibition at any time on our gallery walls, we have a permanent collection of prints from previous shows and in this you will find:

1. Photographs made in the very early stages of the course—some as early as the second and third weeks and by total beginners.
2. Others made throughout later stages—midway, near end and also after.
3. Portraits, by those starting in professional portraiture, of three prints for \$15. and others of three prints for \$25. and another of \$100. a dozen; the last of a series of sittings, booked through an exhibition, which totalled \$500.
4. One illustration from a series of ten for \$500.
5. Three illustrations from a series of thirty-six for \$900.
6. One advertisement from a series of twelve for \$900.
7. A book illustrated with a pupil's photographs which brought (by 1935) \$1558. in royalties and incidental sales to magazines. (This item is reprinted from my last catalog and I've been unable to get in touch with this pupil to get the latest figures.)
8. A book illustrated with another pupil's photographs which brought outright \$3000.
9. A print of a set of sculpture done for a museum \$450. (One of three sets by this pupil in 1937 and 1938; the other two sets were \$275. and \$500.)
10. A print of a set of interiors for \$300.
11. A print of a set of twelve color separations, of paintings in the Metropolitan Museum, for \$500.
12. A print of a set of a hundred, made for a large department store, for \$2500.
13. A print from a series of ten for \$120. which were followed by another series for \$400.
14. Prints from single print jobs at \$25. and \$50. a print.
15. A print from a catalog job of ten illustrations for \$250.
16. A print from a set made for \$100. per day.
17. A print from a set made for \$150. the day.
18. A print from a set made for \$200. the day.
19. A print from a set made for \$175. the half day.
20. A print from a series of twelve for \$500.
21. Some color prints from a black-and-white and color series of illustrations which sell repeatedly and which have already sold \$1400. in less than a year.

And, of course, a good many of the other illustration photographs sell afterwards as stock prints.

The list could be made longer, but some of my pupils are scattered far and wide and the printer is waiting, and unlike the carriage, he is waiting within, and well, what I mean is, in short, that in some fields good art does go hand in hand with good commerce. Considering that this is a small school it would seem—to venture on an understatement—that the LAW OF PROBABILITY is working overtime in my pupils' behalf.



"Mr. Rabinovitch has so frequently shown work of the highest character at the exhibitions, that a course of culture under his direction must be of immense advantage to the . . . photographer desirous of turning out individual work."

—*Brit. Jour. Photography*, Oct. 17, 1930.

"Without a doubt, there is an increasing number of men and women who are eager to find in photography that outlet for their artistic feelings which no other art or profession seems to give them. They have arrived at a point where they need instruction in the artistic fundamentals of pictorial photography. Even though they may be expert technically they need the spark to fire their artistic longings into practical fulfillment by constructive action. Rabinovitch, the well known photographer and salon exhibitor, has conducted a Studio School of Art Photography for the past ten years."

—*Photo-Era Magazine*, March, 1931.

"That eminent photographic artist Rabinovitch who has established his individuality in portraiture and pictorialism these many years, is now conducting classes . . . Only those with an earnest desire to perfect themselves are desired and judging by past achievements such have gotten much from Rabinovitch."

—*Camera Craft*, December, 1932.

"To speak of Rabinovitch as of New York is like localizing Cezanne. He has impressed his art upon the world and in his own way is keeping the place so made, the while he holds for photography itself the acceptance as one of the fine arts. His portraits are portraits, not mechanical enumerations of features . . . Students get the benefit of direct instruction and direct example . . ."

—*Camera Craft*, April, 1933.



